

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Digital Repository

Volume 8

Number 10 *The Iowa Homemaker* vol.8, no.10

Article 2

1928

Travel Tales of a Purnell Field Worker

Cleo Fitzsimmons

Iowa State College

Follow this and additional works at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker>



Part of the [Home Economics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fitzsimmons, Cleo (1928) "Travel Tales of a Purnell Field Worker," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 8 : No. 10 , Article 2.

Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol8/iss10/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Homemaker by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

THE IOWA HOMEMAKER

"A Magazine for Homemakers from a Homemakers' School"

VOL. VIII

APRIL, 1929

NO. 10

Travel Tales of a Purnell Field Worker

Cleo Fitzsimmons '28

A PURNELL field worker is a rare sort of avis, kin, if we judge by her experiences, to pedlars, Farm Bureau workers, and country preachers. The tools of her craft are an account book, a fountain pen and an agile Ford. Her sole purpose for the year of her life during which Purnell research employs her is to secure accurate records of the income and expenditure of Iowa farmers. Her interests are bound by the cost to the farmer of food, clothing and other items of living expense and farm operating costs together with the amount of money received for produce sold, value of produce consumed by the family and the value of the fuel furnished by the farm.

With these facts to get and nothing to give in return except knowledge of which few farmers see any need, the field worker is faced with a nice problem in exchange. She is wholly dependent upon the farmers or usually the farmers' wives for the success of her work. A large part of her task consists of being ready and willing when an opportunity to repay them presents itself.

"We know what we spend," many farmers' wives tell her. "All that we make—and a little more these last few years—goes into our living. We don't need to keep track of that. The farmer is losing money all the while."

"Do you know where you lose it?" the field worker asked.

"Well, no, but we can't get ahead seems like."

"An account would show where your money goes. Perhaps you are spending money needlessly on repairs for worn out machinery when new would be cheaper, or feeding cows that do not produce enough butter-fat to pay."

"I've often wondered if my chickens pay," one woman said hesitatingly after such a conversation. "My husband says they eat more than they're worth. What do your books cost?"

"They're free and I'll be glad to help you with them if you wish."

"But how will these books help you?" asks the farmer's wife.

"I call each month for the account and return the sheets when we have copied the information that they contain. A number is used in place of your name. We are interested only in

APRIL

Margaret L. Marnette.

April's days are happy days,
Bits of smiles and tears,
April's loves will live with you
Down thru all the year.

April's smiles are carefree smiles,
Wanton, lilting, bright,
April's laughter cheers the heart
Thru some lone, dark night.

April's rain is fickle rain,
Blossoming the flowers,
April's days are little ghosts,
Torn bits of ancient hours.

averages—not in any personal account." The field worker explains the simple system of entries and the account is secured.

"My husband's two brothers are bankers and they have taught us to believe in accounts," says the lady in the next house down the road. (The field worker stops at every farm house.) "We've kept an account for five years. I'll be glad to let you have our records for the next twelve months. Won't you come in?"

The field worker follows her into a neat living room. The smell of fresh bread browning calls the housewife to her kitchen and she returns in a short time with a tray upon which are two warm buttered rolls, a bit of honey and a glass of cold milk. "Do you like them?" she asks the field worker.

The field worker does, tho only two hours have passed since breakfast in a

few minutes rolls, honey and milk are gone. The two women talk of books, cake recipes, churning, cross stitch, rural telephones or any of a hundred other things. Most farm women are good hostesses. They are interested in their work and are themselves interesting because of the constant thought and imagination which they bring to the solution of their daily problems. As never before the field worker realizes the amount of skill and planning that goes into butter, fresh bread, gardens, poultry and cottage cheese.

"Where do you get your pay?" the next lady demands. "Is the Farm Bureau or the Farmer's Union behind all this? If they are you'll get no information from me."

"Purnell fund? From the government?" she continues in response to the field worker's reply. "I'll have nothing to do with it. The Department of Agriculture does nothing for the farmer. Do they think we're so dumb that we can't keep accounts if we want to? I can see you mean well, dearie, but these people higher up will do all sorts of harm with the information you get. Farmers won't keep these accounts right and your totals will be all wrong."

Never having had much satisfaction from an argument—won or lost—the field worker admires the view across the fields, fresh with young crops and newly budded leaves. As she turns to go the housewife calls, "But come in and see me sometimes, anyhow."

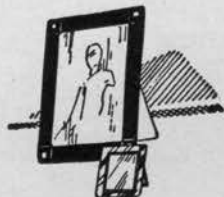
The next house is a tiny white cottage, green shuttered, green roofed, shaded by great maples, clean and attractive as cottages in books. White leghorn chickens are penned in a clean lot behind the house. As the field worker passes they squawk wildly and with beating wings rush to a far corner of the pen. A knock at the cottage door brings no response. In a field near the house a man pauses at his plowing and then having reached the end of a furrow comes

(Continued on page 14)

For all that is good in jewelry

Smith Jewelry Co.

212 Main



YOUR PICTURE

An Easter gift that lasts.

For the finest grade of photography, try

HART'S STUDIO

Down Town



The Smartest New Frocks for

You can be attractively gowned in becoming styles if you visit

Shipley-Pedersen Co.

DOWNTOWN

"The Sterling Store for Women"

well organized extension department, college departments of recognized standing, and over a thousand teachers failed to raise its quota of \$585. We must remove this disgrace before next July. Let us see to it that our delegation at the Boston meeting next summer has no reason to be ashamed of Iowa.

The Iowa State Home Economics Association is this year asking a contribution from every Home Economics trained person. Fill in the blank below, inclose your contribution and hand to your regional council or mail to the chairman of the Ellen H. Richards fund for Iowa.

Lulu E. Smith, Department of Home Economics University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

Name

Teaching address

Amount enclosed

It is hoped that each one can give \$1 or more but contributions of a smaller amount will be appreciated.

Travel Tales of a Purnell Field Worker

(Continued from page 1)

to the fence to see what the field worker may want. She crosses the lawn and the garden and nearly reaches the fence when the horses snort and rear alarmingly. The man rushes to seize their bridles and having caught one extends and arm stiffly toward the field worker.

"Stay back! Stay back, lady! They ain't used to women!"

"I'm all by myself," he says when the field worker has explained her visit. "Spect my account wouldn't help you none. Right good idea tho." He looks as uneasy as his horses.

As she leaves the place the field worker longs for a mirror that she may see for herself what about her should so alarm hens, horses and a bachelor.

"My husband wouldn't like it," a gentle little woman declares. "He ain't the kind to say much about his business."

"I haven't time. There's too much work to do here already," the next woman snapped. "Johnny!" she called irritably. "Come and get these chickens and the dog out of the dining room. You hear?"

Johnny very ragged and dirty steals bashfully by the field worker and into the house. After a confusion of cackling and shooing and a pained yelp there emerge three scraggy Plymouth Rocks, Johnny and a lean yellow dog.

"You say the books are free?" another woman asks. "And you show us how it's done? We need something like that. There's only Jim and me, you see. Jim was shell shocked in France so I mostly look after things. He reads a lot. Bulle-

tins, but they don't do no good. He won't do like they say. We've a mortgage on the place. If the hogs do well we'll stay. If not——. Let's see, the cost of food goes here; of pig feed, here. The stuff you raise and sell goes where? Not that we have much, but I want to do it right. The pigs get acorns from the wood down by the creek. Have you ever seen lady-slipper in bloom? I found some yonder and I brought them up to put them out by the gate. They're in blossom now."

And then the field worker saw her first lady-slippers. Two graceful stalks of them among great fronds of wild fern, in cool shade beneath a thicket of choke cherry, scrub oaks, sumac, wild grape and bitter-sweet.

"There's ginseng down the lane," the woman volunteers, "and May apples, but the season's passed. Here, leave your book. We'll talk as we go down the lane to where you've left your car. I like it living back here in the timber, but sometimes I long to talk to folks."

She told the field worker of illness, her husband's death, an estate divided, and an old grand piano that Libby, the daughter got. "I could play the piano once," she said glancing ruefully at her work worn hands, "the piano and the spinnet too. My spinnet came all the way from Germany but after awhile some of the strings broke and it got so old that Jim and I took out the strings and keys and I use it for a desk."

"Purnell, for the benefit of agriculture?" another woman queries. "Just wait and I'll call John. He'd like to hear this too."

John is big and rugged and kindly. He smiles when the field worker says that a number will be used instead of his name. "Use my name if you like. I'm making money and I don't care who knows it. We've cleared this place the last ten years and now I've bought a hundred acres more. We got it right. One hundred thirty five dollars an acre, sold for two twenty five, eight years ago," Then to his wife, "Sure, go ahead. We'll keep a record. It can't hurt anyone and if it'll help——." He left to track some new cattle so wild that they'd jumped the fence and wandered off in search of home.

"We keep accounts," a tiny German lady tells the field worker. "The mister does. He likes to work with books and things. He went to the University in Germany to be a doctor, but he likes the land. He keeps our garden." She looks proudly about the place. "Last year he made a pool. There are eleven tiny gold-fish in it. Their scales are dark now, but when they're older they get nearly red in color. You like to see the garden?"

"Jackie, speak your piece for the

lady," one mother says. "Ask her to stay with us for dinner and maybe she'll teach you another." The field worker stays and soon after a meal of fried chicken, strawberries, new biscuits and proper trimmings Jackie is able to speak not only the old piece but also Robert Louis Stevenson's "Up Into a Cherry Tree."

But all of the field worker's experiences are not with people. Her Ford must be mentioned. Parts of it are strung by the roadside but they can be replaced and all of the essentials remain. A spark plug breaks, a timer quits with a clamor, a tail light gives up the battle, the lens of a head light falls off to be shattered into a hundred pieces, but the steering wheel holds, the engine rattles and the wheels roll on. Just by the bridge a blowout and another at the crest of a long hill so that each month when she passes those two spots the field worker drives warily and breathes relievedly when they are left behind. Brake bands may burn, clutches slip and batteries freeze. The car being exceedingly temperamental may leap unexpectedly into a snow packed ditch. But the field worker is soon a well known figure to the countryside and there is always someone to help.

All nature is offered the field worker as recompense for any troubles. There are frosty mornings or warm, cloudy or clear. Fields are white and sparkling even among blue veinlike shadows or they lie in green and blue and black patches like a crazy quilt. The skies are clear, pale one day, another sapphire blue, or hidden behind clouds of ever changing pattern. By the help of seasons, wind, sun, clouds and growing plants and leaves, no day is like another. Yet all are beautiful and at last the year seen in review is a long procession of pleasant things.

Milk For Health

(Continued from page 5)

When this, too, has been soaked in, sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar or jelly and serve warm.

A rice pudding is one of the most attractive ways of using milk. Molded rice with raisins uses one quart of milk, one-half cupful of rice, one cupful of seeded raisins, two tablespoonsful of sugar, one teaspoonful of salt and one tablespoonful of corn starch. Boil the rice in one quart of water for five minutes; drain, put into the top of a double boiler with the milk and salt and cook forty-five minutes. Then put it into a bowl or tube pan that has been slightly buttered and set in a cold place. Wash the raisins, boil with one cup of water for ten minutes, add the sugar and mix the corn starch with cold water and add to raisins. Boil five

Spring Toilet Requisites

NEW NUMBERS IN YARDLEY AND HOUBIGANT

Judisch Bros. Drug Store

PARNO'S
Jewelry Store
CRANFORD BLDG.

**EXPERT WATCH, CLOCK &
JEWELRY REPAIRING**
Oldest Established Jewelry Store in
Campustown
Phone 251 Two Watchmakers
ALL WORK GUARANTEED

Every student is a member of Memorial Union

MEMORIAL UNION

Offers food service for every occasion

From

Informal After Class Lunches

To Formal Dinner Parties

Every student is a member of Memorial Union

EASTER

March 31

We are now showing place cards, nut cups and the like for your Easter party.

Choose your Easter greeting cards now.

Student Supply Store

NEXT TO THEATER